IT’S PATENTLY OBVIOUS

PATENTS

The word derives from "Letters Patent", which were official documents from the monarch, widely used over the centuries and still in use today, signing pronouncements and providing authorisations. These were open ("patent" is Latin for "open"), i.e., not sealed, so anyone could read them and see for themselves that they were authentic.







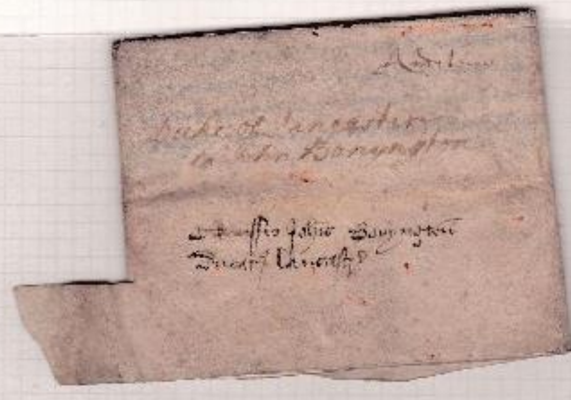








A VERY EARLY LETTERS PATENT



Folded vellum letters patent, dated September 1355 (29th year of reign of Edward III) in French, appointing John Bonyngton to the office of Auditor for the Duchy of Lancaster, with responsibility for most of the North of England. Written in London, but the seal is lost.

The text starts "Henry duc de Lancaster, comte de Derby de Nicole [Lincolnshire] de Leicestre de Herford et de Northampton Senal d'Angleterre [=Seneschal, a senior court appointment in mediaeval England]. A tout ceulx que ses nos l[ett]res ou orront saluz Sachez que nous consonantz entierement en ces discresion & loialtee de mon char & bonne Johan Bonyngton….." and ends "….ces nos l[ett]res patentes admers a me volunite donez sonez me seel a Londres le xx jour de Septembre l'an du regne Ed[ward] vingt & neuve." The last words translate to "our letters patent made under my seal at London the xx of September of the 29th year of the reign of King Edward III"

Little is known about John Bonyngton, but a person with the same name was appointed Auditor for the county of Northumberland under letters patent, again with no seal, issued at Durham Castle on 22 September 1405. The document is held by the University of Pennsylvania, USA.

[illegible] duc de Lancastre Counte de Derby de Nicole de Leycestre de Hereford et de Northampton Seneschal dengleterre. A touz ceulx qi cez
[illegible] verront ou orront saluz. Sachez que nous confiantz entierment en les discrecion et loialtee de nostre cher et bien ame Johan Boryngton
[illegible] avons assignez et constitutez par cez presentes Auditour des acomptes de touz noz ministres qi a nous deivent acomptes rendre en les Countees
[illegible] de Lancastre Northumbr[illegible] Lincoln Notyngham Derby Stafford Warr[illegible] Leycestre et Northampton. Donantz et grantantz au dit
[illegible] plein power [illegible] et [illegible] ce qe a dit office dauditour il appartient. En
[illegible] [illegible] Par quoy nous mandons a touz les
[illegible] [illegible] que au dit Johan en facent entendant de dit office dauditour
[illegible] [illegible] et selon ceo qil lour ferra [illegible] resonablement [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] durantz a nostre volente. Don souz nostre seal a Londres
[illegible] en quele chose nous avons fait faire cestes noz lettres patentes [illegible]
[illegible] jour de Septembre lan du regne [illegible] vingt tierce.

THE MOST FAMOUS LETTERS PATENT: MAGNA CARTA



Gibraltar stamps for 800th anniversary of Magana Carta, showing how the original looked



Wrapper of a milk chocolate bar celebrating the same anniversary

LETTERS PATENT WERE OFTEN USED TO ESTABLISH COLONIES, DISTRICTS OR TOWNS











LETTERS PATENT FOR MAURITIUS





35c 1978 definitive stamp without date imprint showing part of the Letters Patent establishing the formal "Prise de Possession de l'Ile" issued in 1715 by Louis XIV to Guillaume Dufrense d'Arsel. The 1983 imprint imperforate pair is not currently catalogued.


FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
GUERNSEY
SARK: 450 YEARS AS A FIEF TO THE CROWN
Sark: 450 Years as a Fief to the Crown
Guernsey Post First Day Cover

In 1565 Helier de Carteret, Seigneur of St Ouen in Jersey, settled Sark with forty families, establishing a structure of society that remained unchanged for centuries. That was 450 years ago and as Sark celebrates its Elizabethan heritage these stamps record key events from the island's intriguing history.

Our story begins in 565 when Saint Magloire arrived to establish a monastery. He performed many miracles but our 42 pence stamp depicts him in his best-known role as a dragon slayer. He subdues the beast with his stole then led it over the cliff edge to its death.

Our 57 pence stamp moves on in time to the 16th century when the island was a haven for pirates and wreckers. After sailing close by in the 1530s the French writer Rebelais described Sark as a place of 'pirates, thieves, brigands, murderers and assassins.'

In the next decade the island was faring little better, as our 62 pence stamp reveals. In 1549 Sark was occupied by France. The invaders built three forts and held the island until 1553.

On the 6th of August 1565 the Letters Patent from Queen Elizabeth I were signed creating the Fiefdom of Sark and Helier de Carteret as its first Seigneur. Our 68 pence stamp shows Helier's home, Le Manoir, that still stands at the top of Dixcart Valley.

In the 1830s silver and copper mining operations began on Little Sark. The venture failed bankrupting Seigneur Pierre Le Pelley in 1852 who sold the Fief of Sark to the Collings family whose descendants have held the title ever since. Our 77 pence stamp depicts the ruined mine buildings.

GUERNSEY POST

Specification: Date of issue: 22 July 2015. Designer: Nick Shewring. Printer: Lowe-Martin. Values: 42p, 57p, 62p, 68p, 77p, £1, £2. Process: Offset lithography. Stamp size: 30mm deep x 40mm wide. Perforation: 13.3 Miniature Sheet size: 85mm deep x 110mm wide. Miniature sheet Stamp size: 40mm deep x 32mm wide and 25mm deep x 40mm wide. Paper: 110gsm unwatermarked PVA adhesive. Miniature sheet Stamp Perforation: 13.3 Cylinder A.

THE LETTERS PATENT THAT ESTABLISHED SOUTH AUSTRALIA





Back and front of 1985 Australia Post FDC celebrating the 150th anniversary of founding of South Australia

A VILLAGE CALLED HOLLAND PATENT

This village in New York State, USA was founded in 1797 and is named after the Letters Patent relating to the grant of land allowing its foundation.



1869 missent cover with blue Holland Patent postmark to Danvers Centre, Mass.



1880 cover from Holland Patent to Paris, forwarded onto Grand Hotel, Vienna. It has various June 1880 Paris postmarks on the back, and a manuscript "Answered August 3rd 1880" on the front.

PATENTS

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, patents were abused by the English monarchs, who would grant monopolies on basic goods and products, such as making of salt or importing wines, by means of letters patent. These monopolies were granted to wealthy individuals who paid the monarch large sums of money in return. To stop this abuse, the English Parliament in 1624 forced James I to sign The Statute of Monopolies, which restricted the granting of monopolies by means of letters patent to true inventions only. This was the first patent for invention law anywhere in the world, but over the years, England was followed by many other countries with similar laws.













2010 booklet celebrating 100th anniversary of new Dutch Patent Act. The previous Act was suspended in 1869, and for 40 years the Netherlands was the only advanced economy that did not have patents for inventions



SOME FAMOUS PEOPLE WHO WORKED IN PATENTS













Margaret Thatcher spent a few years as a patent lawyer. Edwin Stanton, who served as Secretary of War under Lincoln during the American Civil War, was a lawyer involved in a number of high profile patent infringement cases. Clara Barton, who made her name as nurse during the same war, was a clerk in the US Patent Office before and after tat war. Sir John Monash, WW1 Australian general, had been a patent agent. Albert Einstein developed his most important theories whilst a clerk in the Swiss Patent Office.

THOMAS JEFFERSON - THE FIRST HEAD OF THE US PATENT OFFICE

Under the first US Patent Act (1790) and until 1836, the US Secretary of State (Foreign Secretary in UK parlance) was also the Head of the US Patent Office, and had to approve or reject each patent application that came in. The US Secretary of State from 1790 to 1793 was Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of the USA. It is known that he took his Patent Office responsibilities very seriously.







TWO PATENT OFFICE PIONEERS



Portion of a January 1836 Free Frank letter sent to Moses Poole at the UK Patent Office. Poole was one of the first patent examiners at the Patent Office, but at the same time carried on as a patent agent, something that would not be allowed now.

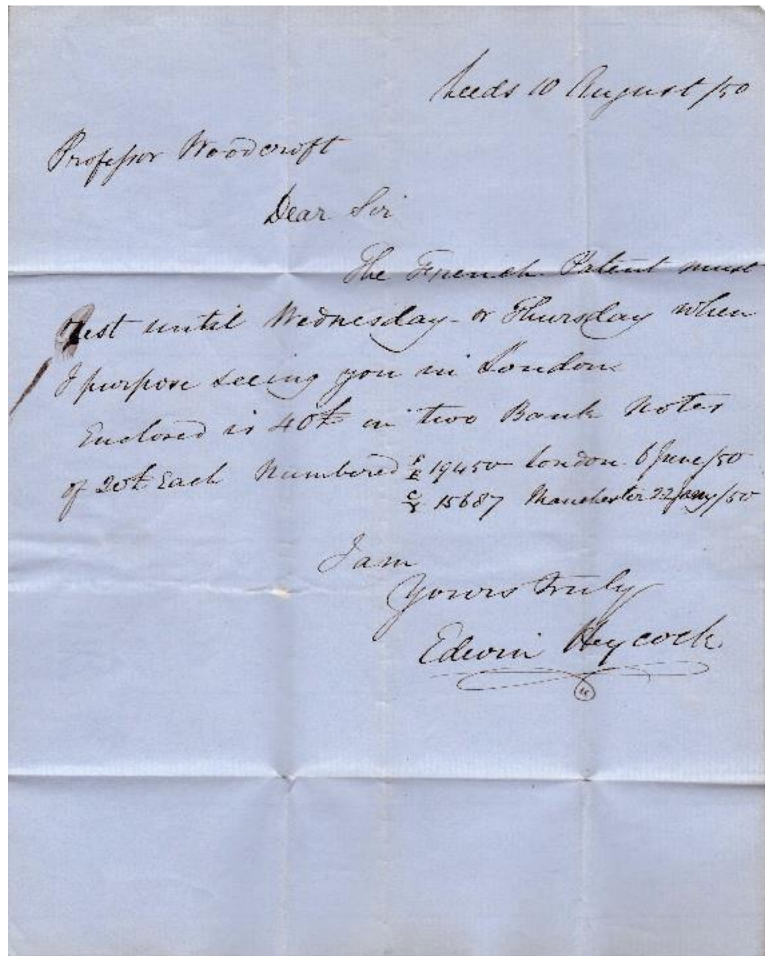


Henry Ellsworth was the first head of the US Patent Office (1835 - 1845). He encouraged both Colt and Morse to patent their key inventions. This undated Free Frank letter is signed by him and was sent from the Patent Office.

BENNET WOODCROFT (1803-1879), LEADING FIGURE IN UK PATENT REFORM, WAS A PATENT AGENT BEFORE HE JOINED THE UK PATENT OFFICE IN 1852



THIS 1850 LETTER, FROM EDWIN HEYCOCK, PAYS WOODCROFT £40 (2 x £20 NOTES WITH LETTER) TO PAY FOR A PATENT GRANT



Leeds 10 August /50

Professor Woodcroft

Dear Sir

The French Patent must rest until Wednesday or Thursday when I purpose seeing you in London

Enclosed is 40£ in two Bank Notes of 20£ each Numbered E 19450 London 6 June/50
C/E 15687 Manchester 22 May/50

I am
Yours truly
Edwin Heycock

AND HERE'S THE PATENT. AS A PATENT AGENT, WOODCROFT SPECIALISED IN HELPING INVENTORS GET PATENTS RELATING TO TEXTILE MANUFACTURING

A.D. 1850 . . . . Nº 12,943.

Finishing and Dressing Woollen Cloths.

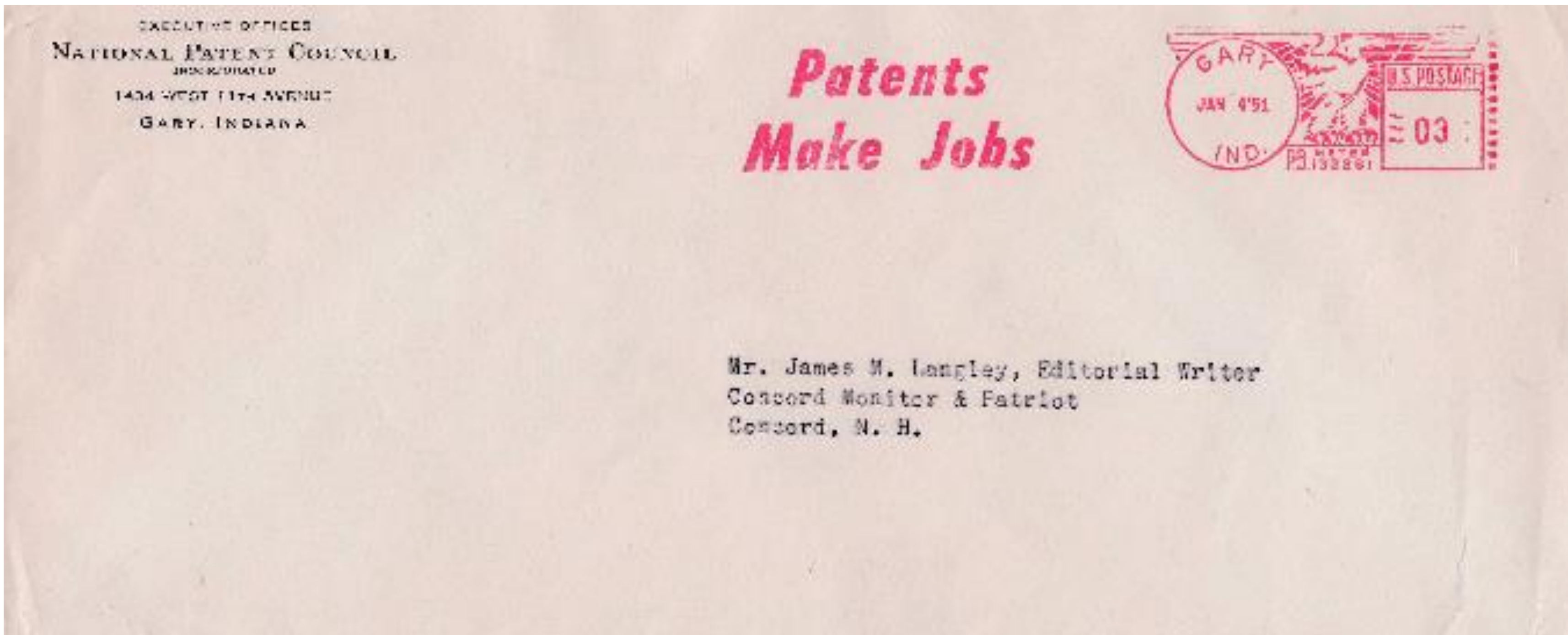
HEYCOCK'S SPECIFICATION.

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, I, EDWIN HEYCOCK, of Leeds, in the County of York, Merchant, send greeting.

WHEREAS Her present most Excellent Majesty Queen Victoria, by Her Royal Letters Patent under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, bearing date at Westminster, the Twenty-sixth day of January, in the thirteenth year of Her reign, did, for Herself, Her heirs and assigns, give and grant unto me, the said Edwin Heycock, my exors, adiñors, and assigns, Her especial licence, full power, sole privilege and authority, that I, the said Edwin Heycock, my exors, adiñors, and assigns, or such others as I, the said Edwin Heycock, my exors, adiñors, or assigns, shall at any time agree with, and no others, from time to time and at all times during the term of years therein expressed, should and lawfully might make, use, exercise, and vend, within England, Wales, and the Town of Berwick upon Tweed, my Invention of "CERTAIN IMPROVEMENTS IN THE FINISHING AND DRESSING OF WOOLLEN CLOTHS;" in which said Letters Patent is contained a proviso that I, the said Edwin Heycock, shall cause a particular description of the nature of my said Invention, and in what manner the same is to be performed, by an instrument in writing under my hand and seal, to be inrolled in Her Majesty's High Court of Chancery within six calendar months next and immediately after the date of the said in part recited Letters Patent, as in and by the same, reference being thereunto had, will more fully and at large appear.

Price [illegible]

PATENTS FOR INVENTION CAN BE CONTROVERSIAL. SOME ARE VERY MUCH IN FAVOUR….



TWO CRITICS OF THE UK PATENT SYSTEM IN VICTORIAN TIMES



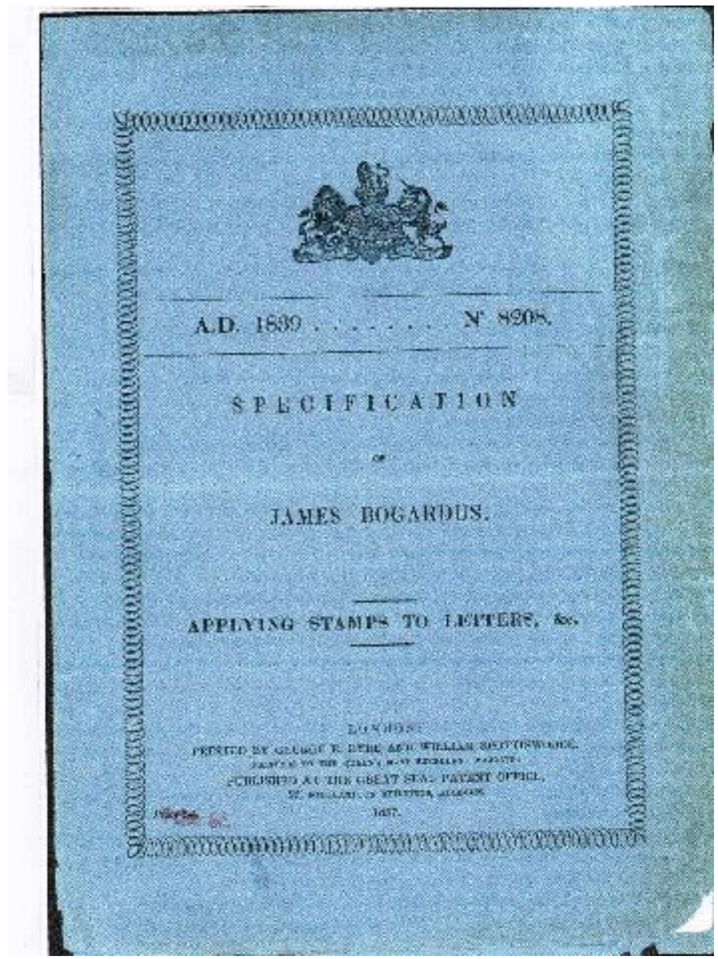


Charles Dickens was a persistent critic of the slow bureaucracy of the UK Patent system in the nineteenth century. He wrote a polemical article in 1850 entitled *A Poor Man's Tale of a Patent*, and in *Little Dorrit*, his hero, Daniel Doyce, is so frustrated by the system that he sells his invention to the Russians, who reward him. (At the time of its publication, the UK was in the Crimean War).



The successful engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel lobbied to have the patent system abolished. He was partly motivated by the poor experiences his father, another engineer, had encountered with the UK Patent system, partly by his own business practices, and partly as a matter of political principle.

James Bogardus' 1839 patent won a £100 prize given to the best entries to the 1839 Treasury Competition. The government, however, chose to follow Rowland Hills' approach


A.D. 1839 . . . . N° 8208.

SPECIFICATION

OF

JAMES BOGARDUS.

APPLYING STAMPS TO LETTERS, &c.

LONDON:

First page of Bogardus' patent, which avoids the use of gummed stamps. Instead a seal attaches the stamp to the envelope.

A.D. 1839 .... N° 8208.

Applying Stamps to Letters, &c.

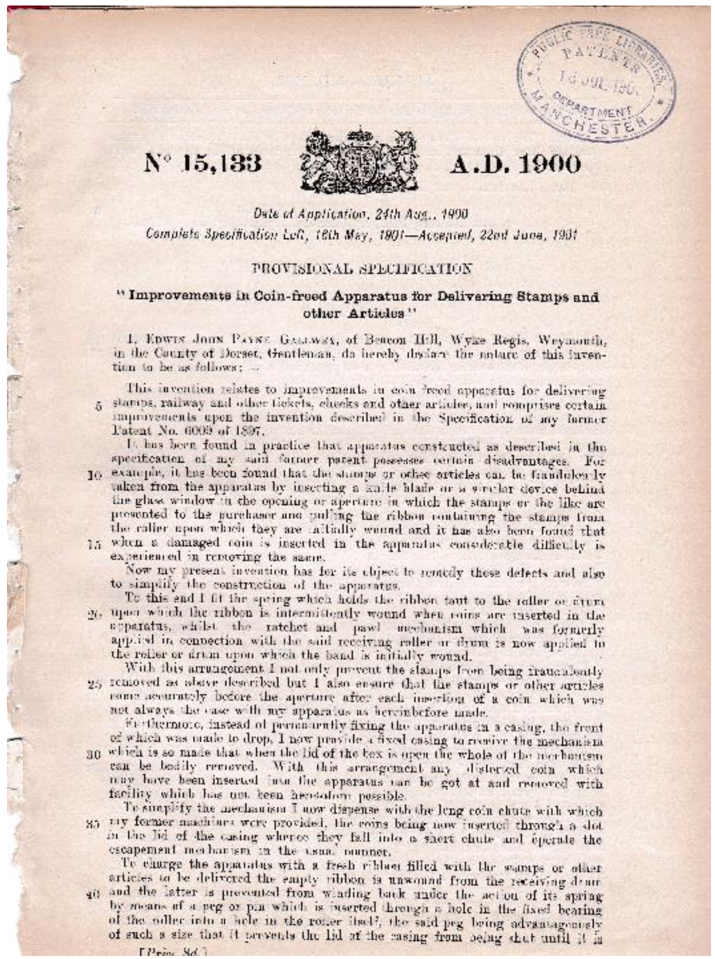
BOGARDUS' SPECIFICATION.

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, I, JAMES BOGARDUS, of Trinity Square, Tower Hill, in the City of London, Gentleman, send greeting.

WHEREAS Her present most Excellent Majesty Queen Victoria, by Her Letters Patent under the Great Seal of Great Britain, bearing date at Westminster, the Twenty-sixth day of August, in the third year of Her reign, did, for Herself, Her heirs and successors, give and grant unto me, the said James Bogardus, Her especial licence, full power, sole privilege and authority, that I, the said James Bogardus, my exors, admors, and assigns, or such others as I, the said James Bogardus, my exors, admors, or assigns, should at any time agree with, and no others, from time to time and at all times during the term of years therein expressed, should and lawfully might make, use, exercise, and vend, within England, Wales, and the Town of Berwick, my Invention of "IMPROVED MEANS OF APPLYING LABELS, STAMPS, OR MARKS TO LETTERS AND OTHER SUCH DOCUMENTS;" in which said Letters Patent is contained a proviso that I, the said James Bogardus, shall cause a particular description of the nature of my said Invention, and in what manner the same is to be performed, to be inrolled in Her said Majesty's High Court of Chancery within six calendar months next and immediately after the date of the said in part recited Letters Patent, as in and by the same, reference being thereunto had, will more fully and at large appear.

NOW KNOW YE, that in compliance with the said proviso, I, the said James Bogardus, do hereby declare that the nature of my said Invention, and

1900 PATENT for coin-operated stamp delivery machines



N° 15,133 A.D. 1900

Date of Application, 24th Aug., 1900

Complete Specification Left, 16th May, 1901—Accepted, 22nd June, 1901

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

"Improvements in Coin-freed Apparatus for Delivering Stamps and other Articles"

I, Edwin John Payne Galloway, of Beacon Hill, Wyke Regis, Weymouth, in the County of Dorset, Gentleman, do hereby declare the nature of this invention to be as follows:—

This invention relates to improvements in coin freed apparatus for delivering stamps, railway and other tickets, checks and other articles, and comprises certain improvements upon the invention described in the Specification of my former Patent No. 6009 of 1897.

It has been found in practice that apparatus constructed as described in the specification of my said former patent possesses certain disadvantages. For example, it has been found that the stamps or other articles can be fraudulently taken from the apparatus by inserting a knife blade or a similar device behind the glass window in the opening or aperture in which the stamps or the like are presented to the purchaser and pulling the ribbon containing the stamps from the roller upon which they are initially wound and it has also been found that when a damaged coin is inserted in the apparatus considerable difficulty is experienced in removing the same.

Now my present invention has for its object to remedy these defects and also to simplify the construction of the apparatus.

To this end I fit the spring which holds the ribbon taut to the roller or drum upon which the ribbon is intermittently wound when coins are inserted in the apparatus, whilst the ratchet and pawl mechanism which was formerly applied in connection with the said receiving roller or drum is now applied to the roller or drum upon which the band is initially wound.

With this arrangement I not only prevent the stamps from being fraudulently removed as above described but I also ensure that the stamps or other articles come accurately before the aperture after each insertion of a coin which was not always the case with my apparatus as hereinbefore made.

Furthermore, instead of permanently fixing the apparatus in a casing, the front of which was made to drop, I now provide a fixed casing to receive the mechanism which is so made that when the lid of the box is open the whole of the mechanism can be bodily removed. With this arrangement any distorted coin which may have been inserted into the apparatus can be got at and removed with facility which has not been heretofore possible.

To simplify the mechanism I now dispense with the long coin chute with which my former machines were provided, the coins being now inserted through a slot in the lid of the casing whence they fall into a short chute and operate the escapement mechanism in the usual manner.

To charge the apparatus with a fresh ribbon filled with the stamps or other articles to be delivered the empty ribbon is unwound from the receiving drum and the latter is prevented from winding back under the action of its spring by means of a peg or pin which is inserted through a hole in the fixed bearing of the roller into a hole in the roller itself, the said peg being advantageously of such a size that it prevents the lid of the casing from being shut until it is

[Price 8d.]

NATIONAL PATENT OFFICES – UK

1829 entire from H. Pooley of the Patent Office, Lincolns Inn, to Mr. Green, requiring payment of £21/12/11d for grant of four patents. “T.P. Chancery Lane” handstamp + “2” chargemark



PATENT OFFICE OFFICIAL STATIONERY



1892 QV Patent Office postcards, stamp die II, overprinted SPECIMEN types 8, 9 and 10, all with 7d request for a copy of a patent specification





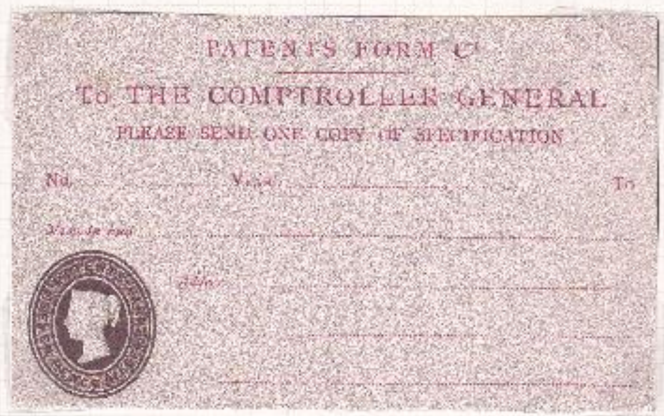
DIE II SPECIMEN



PATENT OFFICE OFFICIAL STATIONERY

The 1892 Queen Victoria postcard request for a copy of a patent specification as finally issued





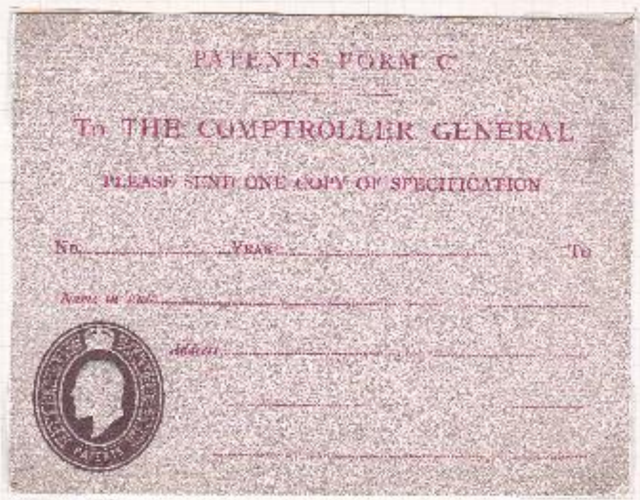
A WELL TRAVELLED LETTER FROM THE PATENT OFFICE
15 December 1902 OHMS + stamp to Copenhagen, redirected to Essen, then to Krugers Hotel, Berlin



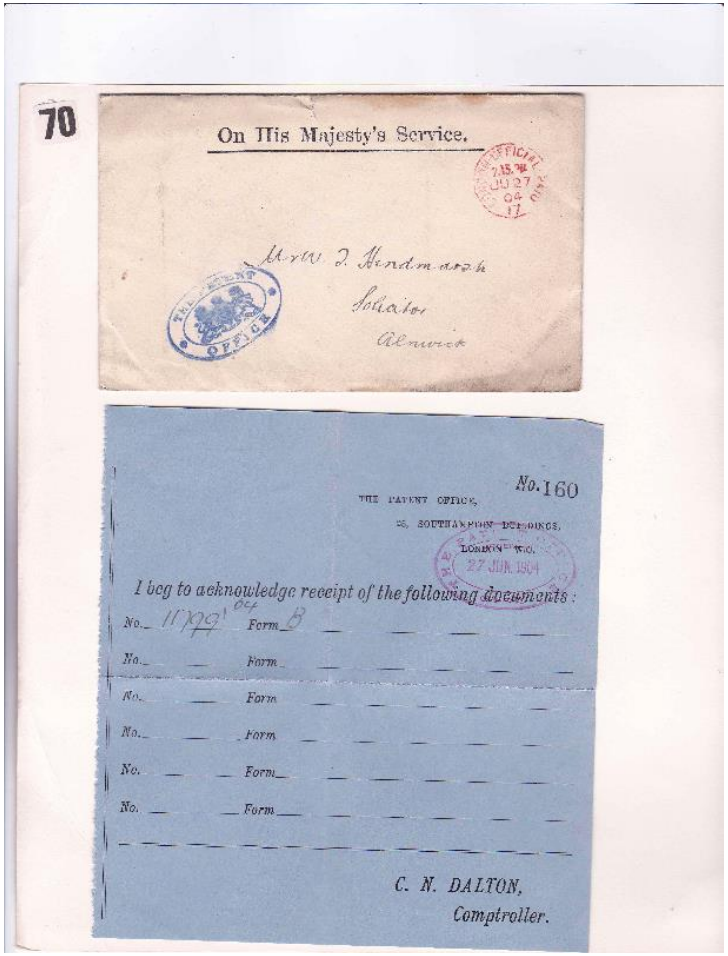
PATENT OFFICE OFFICIAL STATIONERY

1903 Edward VII Patent Office postcard, blue-green, with request for a copy of a patent specification on the reverse





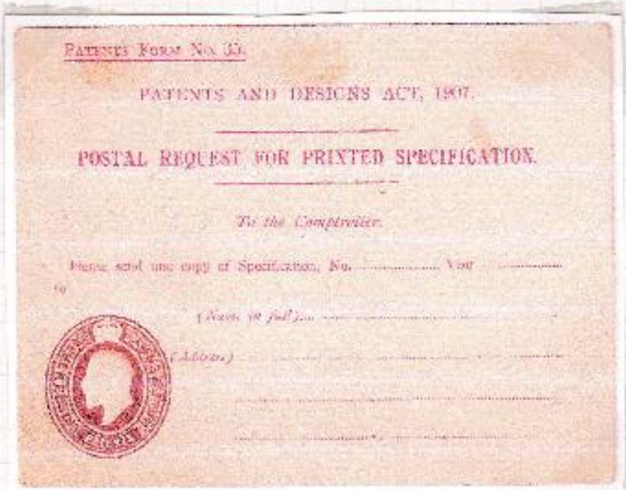
1904 OHMS PATENT OFFICE LETTER



1908 OFFICIAL POSTCARD USED FOR CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE UK PATENT OFFICE

1/2d Yellow-Green on front, 7 1/2d red brown on reverse. De La Rue printing

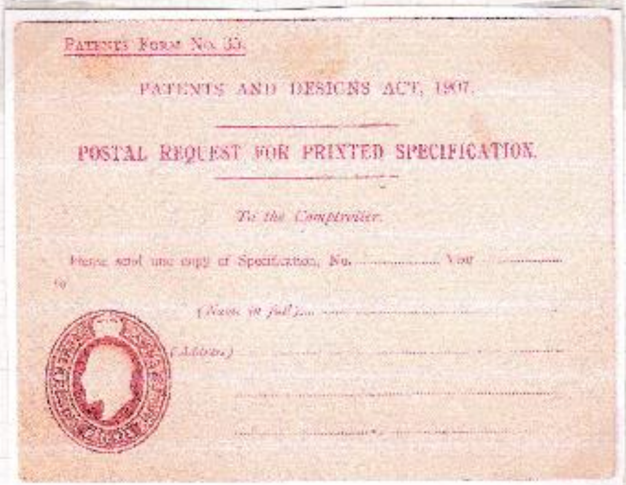




1908 OFFICIAL POSTCARD USED FOR CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE UK PATENT OFFICE

1/2d Yellow-Green on front, 7 1/2d red brown on reverse. De La Rue printing



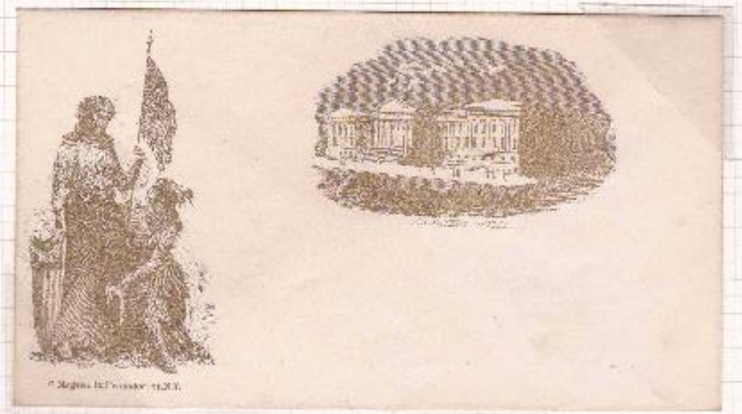


1983 PATENT OFFICE LETTER TO FRAUDSTER ROBERT MAXWELL
Meter mark incorrectly gives Patent Office's address as "Southampton Building" – it should read "Buildings"



THE US PATENT OFFICE WAS PICTURED IN US CIVIL WAR PATRIOTIC ENVELOPES

This was because much of the building was used as a military hospital during the conflict – maybe Clara Barton worked there





US PATENT OFFICE "OFFICIAL BUSINESS" ENVELOPES



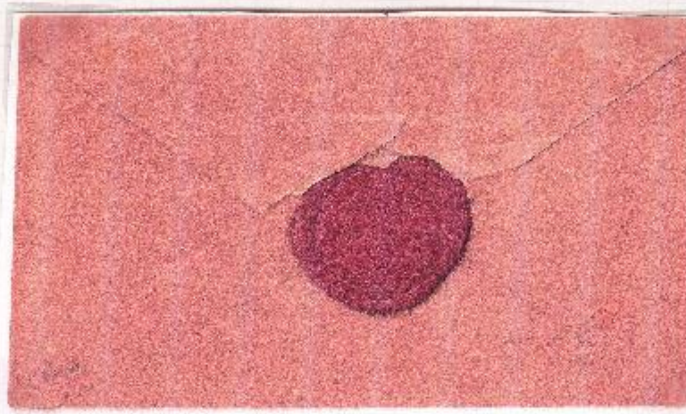


Over the years, the US Patent Office has used many official business imprints. The earlier had to be signed by the then Commissioner of US Patents. Some of them reminded users that there was a penalty for using postage paid envelopes for non-official business. The examples are from between 1837 to 1922. Curiously, Thomas Ewbank's signature appears on the 1837 cover even though he only was Commissioner between 1849 and 1852. Charles Mason was Commissioner between 1853 and 1857.

US PATENT OFFICE PENALTY ENVELOPE

Washington DC CDS free cancel letter sent and signed by Thomas Ewbank, who was US Commissioner of Patents between 1849 and 1852. The letter has a red seal on the back.






United States Patent Office,
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

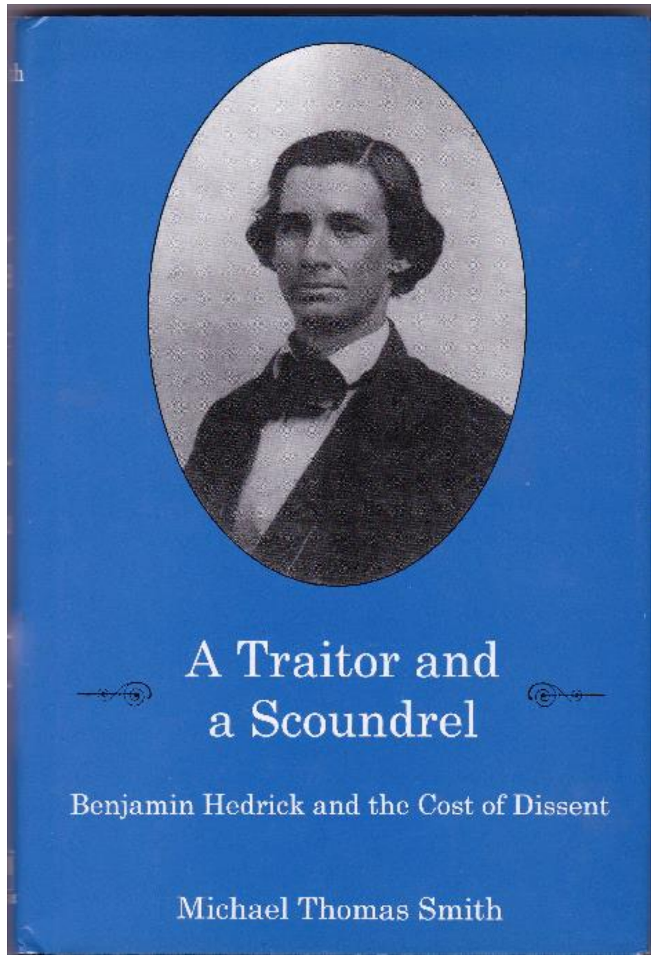
Commissioner.

Byron Tuttle Esq
Plymouth
Litchfield Co.
Conn.


Department of the Interior.
U. S. PATENT OFFICE.
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.
Return if not called for within ten days.

R. H. and D. P. Hall Jr.
48 Pine St,
New York City.

BENJAMIN HEDRICK, AN INTERESTING US PATENT OFFICE EXAMINER





Benjamin Hedrick (1827-1886) worked in the US Patent Office 1861 - 1876, ending up a senior examiner. During the American Civil War, Hedrick corresponded with Confederate PoWs held in Union prisons. One prison was on Johnson's Island, close to Sandusky, Ohio. Hedrick helped the PoWs by sending them sums of money if requested. Very few letters sent by Confederate prisoners to him at the Patent Office have survived. No doubt this letter contained a request by a prisoner for cash, and no doubt he responded by sending some. He must have been very trusting. He believed the prisoner really needed the cash and that his cash would not be confiscated by prison authorities.

The cover has a US 3 cents rose stamp, with a circular Sandusky September 22 (18)64 postmark. It has a faint manuscript censor mark.

THE US PATENT OFFICE DID SOMETIMES REFUSE TO GRANT A PATENT

